

## Treatment house for youth closes

By **KIMBERLY DAVIS**  
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The 180 House, a home for young men recovering from alcohol and drug addictions, was closed last week by its owners, King's Alcohol/Drug Treatment Center out of Wichita.

Heath Bechler, president of the company, said it's been hard for the operation to recover from the death of former administrator Cathy Rieken. Since her death, he said the house has had three

administrators.

The home opened in late 2006 after King's Treatment Center closed its operation at the former Sappa Valley Youth Ranch.

Kings Property Management purchased a house owned by Allen Shelton at 408 N. Elk, and after a few modifications, opened it up to young men.

People in Oberlin have been really supportive of the house, said Mr. Bechler, but it's difficult to go through that many

administrators and just as many counselors in a short time. One thing the constant change has done is make it harder to maintain discipline.

"The kids we take into our homes are not troublemakers," said Mr. Bechler, "but the kids at the 180 House have caused more trouble in the last two months than the others in the entire organization."

He said he didn't sign up to bring problems into town.

On Christmas Eve, the Oberlin Police

Department received a call that a handgun had been found in a vent at the 180 House. Just recently, a young man from the home was arrested for "temporary deprivation of a vehicle," or joy riding, which is a misdemeanor.

Last weekend, police got a call that kids in the house wouldn't settle down and were causing trouble for the staff.

The state Juvenile Justice Authority has expressed some concerns about supervision in the house, said Mr. Bechler, and

they had told him they would be suspending referrals.

He said he thought it was a good time to close, adding that he thinks the firm gave it their best shot.

All of the kids left last week, he said.

The 180 House employed 10 staff members.

If there are openings at other homes in the state, the staffers here will be given a chance to relocate if they want.

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## City money erratic

### Spending up in 2009 budget

By **KIMBERLY DAVIS**  
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Revenues and expenditures for the City of Oberlin have been erratic over the past years, Administrator Austin Gilley told the City Council on Thursday.

Mr. Gilley said he looked at the numbers from past budgets before giving a report at the meeting on Thursday, Jan. 22, about the 2009 budget and prospects for the future. In the next three to five years, he said, the city will start seeing decreases in revenue in several areas.

In 2008, Mr. Gilley said, the city spent \$3.7 million, but the council projected \$4.9 million in spending for 2009. The city does have some cash reserves, he said.

The administrator said it looks like city fees haven't been kept up to date. For example, people are still paying the same rate at the swimming pool that they have been for the past several years.

Really, he said, he doesn't know where the city is, but he's been looking at the budget and past ones trying to figure out where the city

(See MONEY on Page 8A)

## City gives raises

The Oberlin City Council approved raises by position, not by person, after comparing the pay of city employees to other cities in the state.

City Administrator Austin Gilley said the council approved raises for each position, not by the person in the office or their ability to do the job. After looking at what other people in the state in the same jobs were getting paid, he said, they realized that some of the city employees might be underpaid, some by quite a bit.

For those positions that were more than 25 percent under the comparative analysis, said Mr. Gilley, the position got a raise. The money was actually put in the budget during meetings last year. The council budgeted a 4 percent raise based on jobs. The council didn't actually vote to give the raises then, it only voted to put the money in the budget.

With the vote at the meeting Thursday, Jan. 22, not all of the employees will get a raise this year.

The raises based on the positions, not the personnel included:

- \$2 an hour to City Clerk Karen Larson, Treasurer Patti Skubal and Police Officer Brad Burmaster.
- \$1.75 an hour to Officer Troy Haas.
- \$1.25 an hour to David Sporn, with the water department.
- \$1 an hour for Melvin Martin, with the street department and Rita Kinder, who does maintenance in The Gateway.
- 50 cents an hour to Utility Billing Clerk Judy Wenger, Ron Solko with the electric department, cemetery Sexton Nan Stanley and Chris Ward, operational manager at The



**WRAPPING SANDWICHES** in plastic, Nolan Wasson (above left) and Nolan Peters put the finishing touches to the almost 600 subs made and sold by the United Methodist Youth on Sunday. Ashli Samson (directly below) prepared finished sandwiches for sacking while Jori Diederich (bottom) put cheese on them. — Herald staff photos by Cynthia Haynes

## Youths help feed multitude

Teens and adults joined forces Sunday to make close to 600 submarine sandwiches for hungry Super Bowl fans.

Around 18 teenagers and 12 adults made 598 sandwiches in the basement of the United Methodist Church, said Deanna Castle, who helps with the church's youth group.

The crew then delivered the meals all over Oberlin, and to Jennings, Traer, the Danbury area and Norcatar.

Mrs. Castle said they've been holding the fund raiser on Super Bowl Sunday for the past 16 years.

This year, the teens plan to use the money to go on a mission trip over spring break to Colorado. While there, the group will serve a meal at the Denver Rescue Mission. Mrs. Castle said the group hasn't worked at the mission for more than 10 years.



## Norton prison spared the ax in budget cuts

By **TOM DREILING**  
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A state official's reaction to Republican budget-cut proposals had Norton abuzz last week with talk about the possible fate of its state prison and nearly 270 state jobs.

By Friday, though, a House committee had restored part of the cuts from a Senate bill, and officials said the prison and one in Winfield would stay open. Final action will depend on how the two houses settle their differences, however.

Secretary of Corrections Roger Werholtz threatened the closing in a letter to employees assessing the impact of proposed \$9.3 million cuts his department faced under the bill the Senate passed last week.

He concluded that closing some facilities, including prisons at former state hospitals in Norton and Winfield, might be in order.

Other cuts could include an end to supervision of parolees and to all rehabilitation programs, he said.

One area legislator said it would never happen, however.

"The Norton facility is not going to close!" said state Sen. Ralph Ostmeyer, a Grinnell Republican who represents the 40th District of northwest Kansas. The senator said he hoped he could say the same thing for the Stockton honor camp — already targeted for closing — but wasn't sure as he was about the Norton facility.

(See PRISON on Page 8A)

## Primary election not needed here

Decatur County won't have a primary election to determine who will run in the April school and city general elections, since only 10 people filed to run in two cities and one school district.

Three newcomers filed for three seats on the Oberlin School Board, with all three incumbents bowing out. For the Oberlin City County, all three incumbents and one newcomer filed for the three seats.

County Clerk Colleen Geihlsler, who serves as the county election officer, said up to three people could file for each position before a primary would have been needed

next month.

With only 10 people registering for the open spots, there won't be a primary, only the general on Tuesday, April 7.

None of the Oberlin School incumbents decided to file for reelection. Those seats are held by Chris Bailey, whose served for 10 years; Dwayne Jackson, whose served since 1997 years; and Jerry Chambers, who was appointed in March 2007.

People who did file for the three open seats were:

- Abby Hissong, an insurance
- (See VOTING on Page 8A)

## Museum works to fix new building

Work on the newest addition to the Last Indian Raid Museum is well under way.

Since the museum is closed to tours in the winter, Curator Sharleen Wurm and workers have taken the time to work on a building the board purchased from Rich Shaw. The building is between the main building of the museum and the gift shop, sharing walls on either side.

The building was purchased with money that Lois Eckhart left the museum as well as money from an anonymous donor.

"Connecting doorways to the new building are in," said Mrs. Wurm. "They are starting on new paint and putting down new flooring in the addition."

The building will house the museum office, a genealogy room, storage in the back and an area for maintenance and cleaning items.

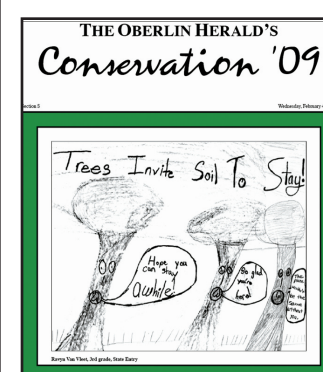
"The main building will include an enlarged parlor for groups. The exhibits in the room will stay, but some of the things on the north wall will be changed around a little so the china cabinets will look more professional," she said.

Besides the new building, the staff plans to rearrange some things in the second annex. The church items are being stored in the church now, so they plan to rework some of the other items.

Mrs. Wurm said they are also trying to organize some of the genealogy files so those can be moved.

In the winter, museum hours are from 9:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays.

The museum closes from Dec. 1 to April 1 for the winter. On Wednesday, April 1, the museum will host a coffee hour.



## Special section in this edition

Each year, families in the county are honored for their work with the land. In today's *Oberlin Herald* is the annual Conservation Section, which has stories about the families that received the awards this year.

Four families received Kansas Bankers Awards from the Decatur County Conservation District.